



## O\*NET OnLine

### Summary Report for: 31-2021.00 - Physical Therapist Assistants

Updated 2010

Bright Outlook

Assist physical therapists in providing physical therapy treatments and procedures. May, in accordance with State laws, assist in the development of treatment plans, carry out routine functions, document the progress of treatment, and modify specific treatments in accordance with patient status and within the scope of treatment plans established by a physical therapist. Generally requires formal training.

**Sample of reported job titles:** Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA), Physical Therapy Assistant (PTA), Physical Therapy Technician, Licensed Physical Therapist Assistant (LPTA), Licensed Physical Therapy Assistant (LPTA)

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### Tasks

- Instruct, motivate, safeguard and assist patients as they practice exercises and functional activities.
- Observe patients during treatments to compile and evaluate data on their responses and progress, and provide results to physical therapist in person or through progress notes.
- Confer with physical therapy staff or others to discuss and evaluate patient information for planning, modifying, and coordinating treatment.
- Transport patients to and from treatment areas, lifting and transferring them according to positioning requirements.
- Secure patients into or onto therapy equipment.
- Administer active and passive manual therapeutic exercises, therapeutic massage, aquatic physical therapy, and heat, light, sound, and electrical modality treatments, such as ultrasound.
- Communicate with or instruct caregivers and family members on patient therapeutic activities and treatment plans.
- Measure patients' range-of-joint motion, body parts, and vital signs to determine effects of treatments or for patient evaluations.
- Monitor operation of equipment and record use of equipment and administration of treatment.
- Fit patients for orthopedic braces, prostheses, and supportive devices, such as crutches.

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### Tools & Technology

Tools used in this occupation:

**Electrotherapy combination units** — Interferential electrical stimulation machines; Iontophoresis equipment

**Full body immersion hydrotherapy baths or tanks** — Hydrotherapy pools; Whirlpool therapy baths

**Patient care beds or accessories for specialty care** — Roto beds; Standing cages; Standing tables; Tilt tables

**Therapeutic heating or cooling pads or compresses or packs** — Cold packs; Therapeutic hot packs

**Walkers or rollators** — Front-wheel walkers; Hemi walkers; Platform walkers; Reciprocating walkers

#### Technology used in this occupation:

**Accounting software** — Billing software; Bookkeeping software

**Action games** — Video game software; Virtual reality game software

**Calendar and scheduling software** — Scheduling software; SpectraSoft AppointmentsPRO

**Data base user interface and query software** — dBase; FileMaker Pro software; Microsoft Access

**Medical software** — BioEx Systems Exercise Pro; Rehab Documentation Company ReDoc Suite; Summit Software CarePoint; TherAssist

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## Knowledge

**Customer and Personal Service** — Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.

**Therapy and Counseling** — Knowledge of principles, methods, and procedures for diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of physical and mental dysfunctions, and for career counseling and guidance.

**Medicine and Dentistry** — Knowledge of the information and techniques needed to diagnose and treat human injuries, diseases, and deformities. This includes symptoms, treatment alternatives, drug properties and interactions, and preventive health-care measures.

**Education and Training** — Knowledge of principles and methods for curriculum and training design, teaching and instruction for individuals and groups, and the measurement of training effects.

**Psychology** — Knowledge of human behavior and performance; individual differences in ability, personality, and interests; learning and motivation; psychological research methods; and the assessment and treatment of behavioral and affective disorders.

**English Language** — Knowledge of the structure and content of the English language including the meaning and spelling of words, rules of composition, and grammar.

**Biology** — Knowledge of plant and animal organisms, their tissues, cells, functions, interdependencies, and interactions with each other and the environment.

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## Skills

**Speaking** — Talking to others to convey information effectively.

**Active Listening** — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.

**Social Perceptiveness** — Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.

**Monitoring** — Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.

**Coordination** — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.

**Critical Thinking** — Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.

**Reading Comprehension** — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.

**Writing** — Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.

**Instructing** — Teaching others how to do something.

**Service Orientation** — Actively looking for ways to help people.

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## Abilities

**Oral Comprehension** — The ability to listen to and understand information and ideas presented through spoken words and sentences.

**Oral Expression** — The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.

**Speech Clarity** — The ability to speak clearly so others can understand you.

**Speech Recognition** — The ability to identify and understand the speech of another person.

**Near Vision** — The ability to see details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).

**Problem Sensitivity** — The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.

**Written Comprehension** — The ability to read and understand information and ideas presented in writing.

**Written Expression** — The ability to communicate information and ideas in writing so others will understand.

**Category Flexibility** — The ability to generate or use different sets of rules for combining or grouping things in different ways.

**Deductive Reasoning** — The ability to apply general rules to specific problems to produce answers that make sense.

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## Work Activities

**Assisting and Caring for Others** — Providing personal assistance, medical attention, emotional support, or other personal care to others such as coworkers, customers, or patients.

**Getting Information** — Observing, receiving, and otherwise obtaining information from all relevant sources.

**Documenting/Recording Information** — Entering, transcribing, recording, storing, or maintaining information in written or electronic/magnetic form.

**Performing General Physical Activities** — Performing physical activities that require considerable use of your arms and legs and moving your whole body, such as climbing, lifting, balancing, walking, stooping, and handling of materials.

**Communicating with Supervisors, Peers, or Subordinates** — Providing information to supervisors, coworkers, and subordinates by telephone, in written form, e-mail, or in person.

**Making Decisions and Solving Problems** — Analyzing information and evaluating results to choose the best solution and solve problems.

**Establishing and Maintaining Interpersonal Relationships** — Developing constructive and cooperative working relationships with others, and maintaining them over time.

**Identifying Objects, Actions, and Events** — Identifying information by categorizing, estimating, recognizing differences or similarities, and detecting changes in circumstances or events.

**Monitor Processes, Materials, or Surroundings** — Monitoring and reviewing information from materials, events, or the environment, to detect or assess problems.

**Organizing, Planning, and Prioritizing Work** — Developing specific goals and plans to prioritize, organize, and accomplish your work.

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## Work Context

**Contact With Others** — How much does this job require the worker to be in contact with others (face-to-face, by telephone, or otherwise) in order to perform it?

**Physical Proximity** — To what extent does this job require the worker to perform job tasks in close physical proximity to other people?

**Face-to-Face Discussions** — How often do you have to have face-to-face discussions with individuals or teams in this job?

**Work With Work Group or Team** — How important is it to work with others in a group or team in this job?

**Frequency of Decision Making** — How frequently is the worker required to make decisions that affect other people, the financial resources, and/or the image and reputation of the organization?

**Telephone** — How often do you have telephone conversations in this job?

**Freedom to Make Decisions** — How much decision making freedom, without supervision, does the job offer?

**Spend Time Standing** — How much does this job require standing?

**Coordinate or Lead Others** — How important is it to coordinate or lead others in accomplishing work activities in this job?

**Exposed to Disease or Infections** — How often does this job require exposure to disease/infections?

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## Job Zone

**Title** Job Zone Three: Medium Preparation Needed

**Education** Most occupations in this zone require training in vocational schools, related on-the-job experience, or an associate's degree.

**Related Experience** Previous work-related skill, knowledge, or experience is required for these occupations. For example, an electrician must have completed three or four years of apprenticeship or several years of vocational training, and often must have passed a licensing exam, in order to perform the job.



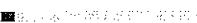
**Job Training** Employees in these occupations usually need one or two years of training involving both on-the-job experience and informal training with experienced workers. A recognized apprenticeship program may be associated with these occupations.

**Job Zone** These occupations usually involve using communication and organizational skills to coordinate, supervise, manage, or train others to accomplish goals. Examples include food service managers, electricians, agricultural technicians, legal secretaries, interviewers, and insurance sales agents.

**SVP Range** (6.0 to < 7.0)

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## Education

Percentage of Respondents	Education Level Required
71 	Associate's degree
21 	Some college, no degree
7 	High school diploma or equivalent

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## Interests

Interest code: **SRI**

**Social** — Social occupations frequently involve working with, communicating with, and teaching people. These occupations often involve helping or providing service to others.

**Realistic** — Realistic occupations frequently involve work activities that include practical, hands-on problems and solutions. They often deal with plants, animals, and real-world materials like wood, tools, and machinery. Many of the occupations require working outside, and do not involve a lot of paperwork or working closely with others.

**Investigative** — Investigative occupations frequently involve working with ideas, and require an extensive amount of thinking. These occupations can involve searching for facts and figuring out problems mentally.

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## Work Styles

**Concern for Others** — Job requires being sensitive to others' needs and feelings and being understanding and helpful on the job.

**Cooperation** — Job requires being pleasant with others on the job and displaying a good-natured, cooperative attitude.

**Integrity** — Job requires being honest and ethical.

**Attention to Detail** — Job requires being careful about detail and thorough in completing work tasks.

**Dependability** — Job requires being reliable, responsible, and dependable, and fulfilling obligations.

**Self Control** — Job requires maintaining composure, keeping emotions in check, controlling anger, and avoiding aggressive behavior, even in very difficult situations.

**Adaptability/Flexibility** — Job requires being open to change (positive or negative) and to considerable variety in the workplace.

**Social Orientation** — Job requires preferring to work with others rather than alone, and being personally

connected with others on the job.

**Initiative** — Job requires a willingness to take on responsibilities and challenges.

**Stress Tolerance** — Job requires accepting criticism and dealing calmly and effectively with high stress situations.

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## Work Values





**Relationships** — Occupations that satisfy this work value allow employees to provide service to others and work with co-workers in a friendly non-competitive environment. Corresponding needs are Co-workers, Moral Values and Social Service.

**Support** — Occupations that satisfy this work value offer supportive management that stands behind employees. Corresponding needs are Company Policies, Supervision: Human Relations and Supervision: Technical.

**Working Conditions** — Occupations that satisfy this work value offer job security and good working conditions. Corresponding needs are Activity, Compensation, Independence, Security, Variety and Working Conditions.

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## Related Occupations

- 21-1021.00 [Child, Family, and School Social](#) 
- 21-1093.00 [Social and Human Service Assistants](#) 
- 29-1123.00 [Physical Therapists](#) 
- 29-1125.00 [Recreational Therapists](#)
- 29-9091.00 [Athletic Trainers](#) 

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## Wages & Employment Trends

### National

**Median wages (2009)** \$23.22 hourly, \$48,290 annual

**Employment (2008)** 64,000 employees

**Projected growth (2008-2018)**  Much faster than average (20% or higher)

**Projected job openings (2008-2018)** 30,500



**Top industries (2008)** [Health Care and Social Assistance](#)

### State & National

Select a State

Go



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics [2009 wage data](#)  and [2008-2018 employment projections](#) . "Projected growth" represents the estimated change in total employment over the projections period (2008-2018). "Projected job openings" represent openings due to growth and replacement.

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## Sources of Additional Information

**Disclaimer:** Sources are listed to provide additional information on related jobs, specialties, and/or industries. Links to non-DOL Internet sites are provided for your convenience and do not constitute an endorsement.

- [Physical therapist assistants and aides](#)  Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor. *Occupational Outlook Handbook, 2010-11 Edition.*

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Send comments or questions to [O\\*NET Info \(onet@onetcenter.org\)](mailto:onet@onetcenter.org).